

The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

C/NIC
8 JUNE 84

National Intelligence Council

NIC 03338-84
8 June 1984

MEMORANDUM TO: Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Department of State

FROM: Robert M. Gates
Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: IIA on "Impending Availability of Unclassified
High-Resolution Imagery: Likely Foreign Reactions
and Implications for US Interests" (C)

1. On 26 July 1983 you made a formal request to Harry Rowen for an interagency assessment on the referenced topic. Attached is the final product, which has received full distribution throughout the policy and intelligence communities. It was prepared under the auspices of NIO at Large David Low, drafted by [redacted] OSOVA, and coordinated at the working level. (C)

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2. You were quite right to perceive important issues in this topic. In fact, there are other questions such as the implications of the commercialization of new systems and the relative capabilities of foreign governments to exploit high resolution imagery which deserve attention but which we considered beyond the scope of your request. (S)

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4. I would also call your attention to two related papers issued by the Directorate of Intelligence:

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SUBJECT: Memo to Hugh Montgomery, State Department Transmitting IIA:
"Impending Availability of Unclassified High-Resolution
Imagery: Likely Foreign Reactions and Implications for US
Interests"

NIO/AL/DL:

8 June 1984

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH
WASHINGTON

July 26, 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Henry S. Rowen
Chairman
National Intelligence Council
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT : Request for Intelligence Assessment

Harry,

This is to request that the Intelligence Community undertake an assessment of foreign reactions to the impending availability of unclassified high resolution photography obtained from space systems under a current NASA program. The situation which we believe should be addressed is described briefly below.

In January 1984 and again in August 1984, NASA plans to fly and operate aboard the Space Shuttle a Large Format Camera (LFC) which will produce the highest resolution photography ever obtained by an unclassified space system--about 12 to 20 meters GRD. For the August flight, NASA also plans to fly an imaging radar system known as the SIR-B together with the LFC. The January mission will be flown in a 28 degree equatorial orbit, making it impossible to image the Soviet Union. The August mission will be at 58 degrees inclination making the USSR a potential candidate for imaging.

The case for a serious Intelligence Community review of the implications of this development is based on the following considerations:

- There is a clear need to anticipate potential adverse foreign, especially Soviet, reaction to the collection, release, and public sale of unclassified LFC quality imagery.
- There is a clear need to prepare a policy defense if anticipated adverse reaction develops.
- There has been no serious review of likely foreign reaction to the flight of unprecedentedly high resolution unclassified imagery since the flight of SKYLAB in the early 1970s.

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DECL: OADR

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--Apart from the important matter of reactions, we may want to look at the broader implications of the widespread availability of satellite imagery.

In considering how to approach this matter, the following factors are relevant:

10 Meters Authorized by Space Policy--In proposing to fly the LFC aboard the Shuttle NASA is operating within space policy guidelines extant since 1978 which specify that the USG can operate 10 meter civil systems. All policy statements, since 1978, covering this point have been TOP SECRET.

The latest iteration of the 10 meter rule in NSDD-42 of July 12, 1982 (National Space Policy), states:

"Civil earth imaging from space, at resolutions at or better than ten meters, will be permitted under controls and when such needs are justified and assessed in relation to civil benefits, national security and foreign policy."

10 Meters Responds to Civil/Commercial Needs--The resolutions likely to be achieved by the LFC are in fact the kinds of resolution which many major civil users, especially commercial users (mineralogical and petroleum) and government map makers need.

Other Nations' Plans--Other nations, notably France, are already planning and advertising civil remote sensing systems with greatly improved resolution. France plans to fly a 10 meter (GSD-electro-optic) system in 1984.

10-20 Meter Resolution Yields Military Intelligence--The resolution likely to be achieved by the LFC (and by other countries' systems in this decade) will produce intelligence of definite military value even though the resolution falls short of the quality standards to which we (and presumably the Soviets) have now become accustomed from our space reconnaissance systems.

Action Requested. INR requests that the Community undertake an assessment (SNIE, IIM, etc.) along the lines laid out above. We understand that the National Reconnaissance Office is interested in such a paper and we believe that it will be useful to a number of other agencies as well. The INR action officer for this subject is William Deary (INR/IRE), who can be reached on 632-0877.

Many thanks!


Hugh Montgomery

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